

To: Jon Laria, Growth Commission Chairman

From: Sandy Coyman and Frank Hertsch

Date: September 26, 2011

Re: Indicators Workgroup Status Report

Introduction

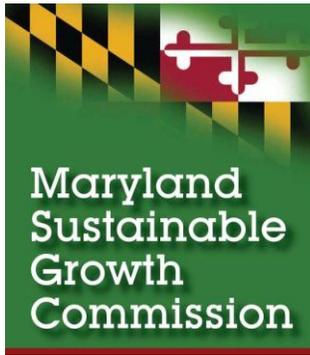
This document is the Indicators Work Group status report to the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission for the Commission's September 26, 2011 meeting. Below the work group provides background on its work to date, the results of the four beta testing jurisdictions' review of the proposed indicators and the work group's findings and recommendations. The work group received results and indicator assessments from two jurisdictions, and partial results/assessments from the other two jurisdictions; the work group will continue to seek complete results.

A review of the existing required five indicators and the analyzed potential indicators ability to address the commonly accepted ten principles of smart growth and Maryland's twelve visions is attached along with a matrix of the beta testing results received to date. Although only partial results are in, the work group believes its initial recommendations can begin Commission members' thought process on this matter. Final results and final recommendations will be transmitted as they become available.

Background

In July of this year, an indicator beta testing group was formed to further "test" the usefulness and feasibility of collecting the fifteen specific indicators proposed to the Growth Commission, in December of 2010. This group is comprised of representatives from four jurisdictions: Kathleen Freeman (Caroline County Planning), Kathleen Maher (City of Hagerstown Planning), Pamela Dunn (Montgomery County Planning), and Lynn Thomas (Town of Easton).

The beta testing group met in July to discuss the indicators to be tested and the process for collection. Each representative was provided a matrix including the fifteen indicators with a series of questions about each indicator. Questions included data availability, source information, feasibility of collecting indicator if not currently available, and thoughts on

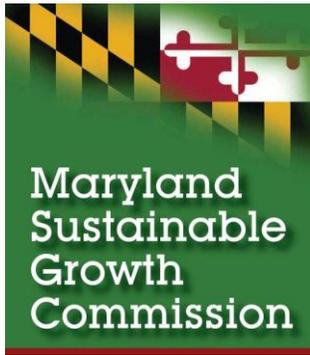


proposed indicators and potential source recommended by technical team. Participants were also asked to provide data for a number of the indicators.

To assist in the effort of data collection workgroup staff gathered data for a number of the indicators, primarily those available from Census or other Federal data sources. For each of the indicators gathered by workgroup staff prepared a summary document for each indicator with the caveats and summary data for all counties. A matrix is attached with the completed data for the four beta jurisdictions. We will make the individual summaries available to anyone interested in them.

The fifteen indicators recommended by previous work groups for consideration by the Growth Commission include:

1. Housing Choices, including affordability:
 - a. Housing Vacancy Rate
 - b. Housing production / growth
 - c. Rental and Owner Affordability
 - d. Home Sales and Affordability
2. The Impact of Growth on the Environment, including Land, Air, & Water:
 - a. Development on septic systems
 - b. Percentage of new development served by public sewer
 - c. Acres of open space in permanent protection and the means of protection
 - d. The amount of forest acres cleared, conserved, and planted
 - e. Wastewater treatment plant capacity and reported flow
 - f. Land Use Change - loss of agricultural resource lands
3. The Job and Housing Balance:
 - a. Jobs-Labor Force Ratio
4. The Impact of Transportation on Growth:
 - a. Mode shares of transit, walk and bike for work or non-work, telecommuting
 - b. Transit ridership rates
 - c. State major transportation investment inside or outside PFAs



5. The Impact of Growth on Cultural and Historic Resources:
 - a. Number of projects reviewed for compliance with federal and State

Beta Group Findings

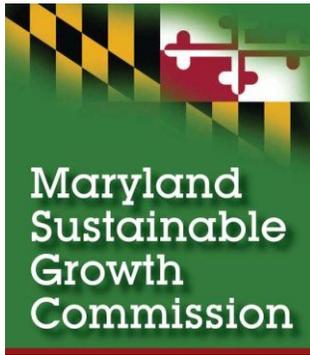
Housing Choices, including affordability

Four indicators were reviewed by the beta testing jurisdictions in this category. These included housing vacancy rate, housing growth/production, rental/owner affordability and home sales affordability.

1. Housing vacancy- Beta testers agreed that Census/ACS (American Community Survey) is the best data available at the County and Municipal level. However this data is not always timely, one recommendation from group is to use 2010 Census as base and update every 3 years with ACS. Testers also noted that the HUD data would be timelier and would be available in the near future, as conflicts with USPS are getting resolved. However, these data are only available at the Census Tract level which would make reporting at the municipal level difficult.
2. Housing growth/production- This indicator is already required as of July 1, 2011. All beta testers did note that this data is available through permitting process and there have not been any difficulties in gathering this information.
3. Rental/owner affordability- All participants agreed that the Census/ACS is the best source for this information. Only comment is that the data will only be updated every three years.
4. Home sales and affordability- Responses on the ability to collect this metric varied across the group. The municipal representatives noted that there is no current source for this information and it would be difficult to collect. At the County level, the proposed data source is acceptable. Additional comments proposed the use of MLS (Multiple Listing Service) or BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics) data to complete the computation.

The impact of growth on the environment, including land, air and water

1. Development on septic systems and sewer- All participants noted that these two indicators could be collected. The data is available from permit data or health department.
2. Acres of open space in permanent protection- Data are available for all jurisdictions. Most noted that if collected they would provide the data. It was suggested that if this indicator were proposed



a specific list of types of lands to be included be outlined in detail, as the level of detail and availability varies for some types of easements.

3. Amount of forest acres cleared, conserved, & planted- Comments varied by participant for this metric. Most noted that this information is required under the Forest Conservation Act and is available in other required reports. However, not all jurisdictions currently maintain an active database of this information; therefore if historical data were needed it would involve some work.
4. Wastewater treatment plant capacity- Metric is available from local utilities.
5. Loss of agricultural resource lands- Responses varied from having their own tracking database to only collecting when part of a development project. No members suggested that the Agricultural Census (collected every 5 years) could not be a potential source of the data; however it was noted that if more timely data are available those should be used.

The job and housing balance

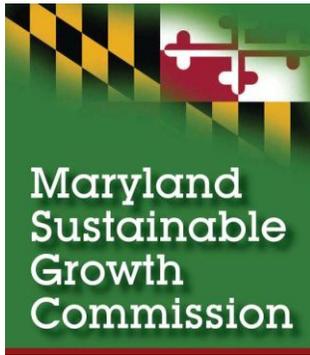
1. Jobs-labor force ratio- Most jurisdictions noted some type of difficulty in collecting or credibility of the data proposed for this. In addition, the data are only available at the County level.

The impact of transportation on growth

1. Mode shares of transit, walk, bike for work and non-working- Participants agreed with proposed data source, noting that is what the jurisdiction currently uses.
2. Transit ridership rate- Response for this metric varied. Some jurisdictions noted that this information is available from local authorities, while others noted it is not currently collected. It is noted that this data is available from the Council of Governments therefore it may be possible to collect this data for many jurisdictions.
3. State and local major transportation investment by PFA- Most participants note that this is not something they currently collect. While the State does collect this information, comment was made about ability to collect at local level. Only one participant noted they can provide this data from their CIP (Capital Improvement Plan).

The impact of growth on cultural and historic resources

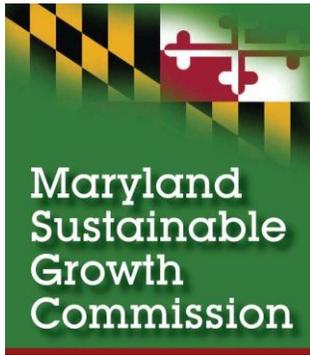
1. Number of projects reviewed for compliance with Federal and State laws (Section 106) - Program is administered by the Maryland Historic Trust. While it appears this data may be available at the County level, there is not currently a designation of those projects at the municipal scale.



Work Group Findings and Recommendations

Findings

1. The existing required indicators coupled with the potential indicators address the ten commonly accepted smart growth principles and Maryland's twelve visions at least tangentially.
2. The existing required indicators address many of the principles and visions but not all.
3. The possible indicator of "housing production/growth" is already addressed by the existing required indicators.
4. Eight of the remaining potential indicators can be readily calculated from data available to or collected by the Maryland Department of Planning.
5. Six potential indicators rely on locally generated data. Five of which the beta testing group had data to prepare them.
6. Many local jurisdictions have modest staff resources and these resources have declined recently due to budget cuts.
7. Maryland Department of Planning and the Center for Smart Growth have the capability to gather data and calculate indicators.
8. The Maryland Department of Planning is preparing a web based tool to assist with local jurisdictions' preparation of the required local annual development activity reports. This tool should be explored for its capability to produce the potential indicators.
9. Two beta testers have provided their assessment of the potential indicators and the use of indicators in general. Their comments are below.
10. Beta testing results are not conclusive at this point. Additional experience with data gathering and indicator calculation and analysis is needed. To this end, use of the state's annual report web tool could be a useful mechanism for a program of additional testing. However, it is noted that not all jurisdictions will choose to use the annual report web tool.



Recommendations

1. Determine whether the Center for Smart Growth or MDP should be the developer of the Census and state data based indicators and provide appropriate funding. The selected organization would also collate the local based indicators. All indicators should be compiled and analyzed in an annual report.
2. The MDP web tool should be modified to collect the potential indicators. However, an alternative format will be designed for those jurisdictions that choose not to use the web tool.
3. An expanded beta testing group of sufficient size should be gathered and be committed to providing the data for the local information based indicators for a four-year test period. A core group of beta testers of sufficient size should be assembled . This group should commit to providing the local data needed to calculate the local data dependent indicators. Also other local jurisdictions may voluntarily provide this type data as part of their annual reporting. They may then use the resulting indicators to assess their smart growth progress. At the end of the period, the efficacy of the potential indicators should be assessed. Continuation of this effort and the mechanism for their expanded data collection should be determined at that time.
4. MDP should monitor the potential indicators' use and MDP may add the results to its annual report.
5. The required and potential indicators do not access jurisdictions' development guidance system (zoning, subdivision and other implementation ordinances) for their smart growth potential. Indicators addressing this shortfall should be provided.